

**A STUDY REVIEWING MOTIVES FOR PARTICIPATION
AND THE POSTENROLLMENT TRANSITION AFTER
COMPLETING A GRADUATE DEGREE PROGRAM**

**A Thesis
Presented to
the School of Education
Drake University**

**In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Specialist in Education**


**by Julie Summers
February 2001**

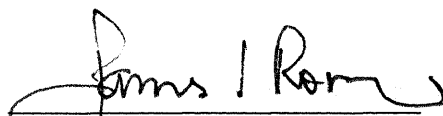
A STUDY REVIEWING MOTIVES FOR PARTICIPATION
AND THE POSTENROLLMENT TRANSITION AFTER
COMPLETING A GRADUATE DEGREE PROGRAM

by Julie Summers
February 2001

Approved by Committee:


Thomas S. Westbrook


Darlene Bradner


James L. Romig
Dean of the School of Education

A STUDY REVIEWING MOTIVES FOR PARTICIPATION
AND THE POSTENROLLMENT TRANSITION AFTER
COMPLETING A GRADUATE DEGREE PROGRAM

An abstract of a Thesis by
Julie Summers
February 2001
Drake University
Advisor: Thomas S. Westbrook

The Problem. The purpose of this study is to compare the initial leaning objectives to the objectives achieved after completing the degree and to identify the postenrollment transition adults make after completing their degree.

Procedures. The author interviewed twenty graduates of a Training and Development graduate degree program. The author asked each participant about his/her initial learning objectives and the objectives achieved after completing the graduate program. The author also asked each participant about his/her postenrollment transition after completing the graduate program.

Findings. Twenty participants indicated they met their initial learning objectives and many derived unexpected benefits from participating in the graduate degree program. Each individual's postenrollment transition varied depending on the his/her personal situation.

Conclusions. Most students meet their initial learning expectations. Upon completing a graduate degree program, some students may derive unexpected benefits. Students experience a wide range of feelings in conjunction with the postenrollment transition associated with graduation.

Recommendations. Research should be conducted that surveys participants prior to the learning experience and again after the learning experience has been completed to compare the initial learning objectives to the derived benefits. Likewise, during the postenrollment transition period, the researcher should contact the subject to track the transition over time. Finally, additional research is needed to determine if various demographic variables impact the student's postenrollment transition.

Table of Contents

Chapter	Page
1. INTRODUCTION	1
Background of the Study	1
Purpose of the Study	2
Research Questions	2
Method	3
Significance of the Study	3
Delimitations of the Study	4
Assumptions	4
Definitions and Terms	5
2. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE	6
Identifying Adult Learners	6
Models Regarding Why Adults Participate in Learning	8
Summary of Research on Why Adults Participate in Learning Activities	12
Summary of Findings About Motivational Orientations	28
General Conclusions Relating Demographic Dimensions to Participation	29
Aslanian and Brickell - Participation Linked to Transitions	30
Benefits Achieved Through Participation in Education	32

A Summary of Transitions Associated with Death, Unemployment, and Parenthood	34
Conclusion.....	39
3. RESEARCH DESIGN	40
Sample Selection.....	40
Data Collection Instrument.....	41
Data Analysis.....	42
Conclusion.....	42
4. PRESENTATION OF DATA AND FINDINGS	43
Data.....	43
Conclusion.....	47
5. DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS...	48
Discussion of Findings.....	48
Conclusion.....	54
Recommendations.....	54
REFERENCES	56

Tables

Table	Page
1. Participant's Main Reason for Participating in an Educational Program.....	44
2. Additional Reasons for Participating in an Educational Program.....	44
3. Unexpected Benefits Gained from Participating in an Educational Program.....	45
4. General Feelings Stated Upon Completing the Educational Program.....	46
5. Changes Subjects Faced During or After Completing the Educational Program.....	47

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

The number of adults participating in adult education has grown during the past thirty-five years (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999). However, the demographic profile of the typical learner has remained consistent (Johnstone & Riveria, 1965; Aslanian and Brickell, 1980; Merriam & Caffarella, 1999). Learners are better educated, younger, most likely white and employed full-time and are likely to have higher incomes.

Researchers have studied why adults participate in educational programs. Some studies are broadly focused, capturing the learner's primary motivation for participation in education (Johnstone & Riveria, 1965; Dugger, 1965; Cross, 1981). Some studies focus on work compared to non-work related reasons for participation (Lorimer, 1931; Courtney, 1992). Researchers have also developed classification schemes based on the learners motivational orientations leading to their participation in educational programs (Houle, 1961; Sheffield, 1962; Boshier, 1971; Morstain & Smart, 1974; Burgess, 1971). Aslanian and Brickell (1980) linked participation to transitions that adults experience.

Many studies have captured the reasons adults originally stated for participating in educational programs. Only one study was identified that captured the benefits that adults stated they achieved through education (Woodley, Wagner, Slowey, Hamilton, & Fulton, 1987). However, the researchers did not compare the benefits achieved to the learner's initial objectives.

In addition to understanding why adults participate in graduate programs and the benefits obtained after completing a program, the researcher examined the postenrollment transition that occurs following graduation. Research regarding postenrollment transition is limited; other life transitions were reviewed, including the transition associated with death, unemployment and parenthood. Although general models have been developed regarding the general stages associated with each transition, the time frame and feelings associated with each transition is highly personal and may vary based on situational factors.

Purpose of the Study

Currently, research exists regarding the characteristics of adult learners and several studies have identified the motivations that influence adult participation in learning programs. However, little research has been conducted to determine if adult learners achieve their goals and the postenrollment transition that occurs following the completion of a graduate degree program. This study was designed to compare the initial learning objectives to the objectives achieved after completing the graduate degree program and identify the postenrollment transition adults experience upon graduation.

Research Questions

The following is a summary of the research questions included in this study.

1. What was the adult learner's initial reason for participating in the educational program?
2. Did the learner meet his/her original learning objective?

3. Did the learner derive unexpected benefits from participating in the program?
4. What were the learner's general feelings as he/she transitioned from being enrolled in a graduate degree program to graduating from the program?

Method

Initially, the researcher obtained a list of students who completed the Master of Science degree program in training and development at Drake University via the Iowa Communications Network (ICN). The researcher conducted twenty open-ended phone interviews with students. The researcher asked each participant questions related to their initial learning objectives, the actual benefits derived, and the feelings and personal changes that accompanied the participant's postenrollment transition. The researcher also captured demographic information from each participant.

Significance of the Study

This was a qualitative study designed to understand the relationship between the learner's original learning objective and the benefits derived from participating in an educational program. In conjunction with understanding the benefits derived, the adult's postenrollment transition after completing the program was examined. Administrators that understand the objectives associated with participating as well as the barriers that may prevent adults from participating may be able to make program adjustments to better accommodate the needs of adult students. Meanwhile, initial research regarding the postenrollment transition indicates university administrators may be able to better prepare students for the transition.

Delimitations of the Study

In this study, the sample size was limited. The population included in the study consisted of twenty students who completed a training and development graduate program at Drake University. The accessible population from which the sample was derived was reduced by the fact that some students had relocated and could not be contacted. The sample was further reduced because some students who started the program had yet to complete the program. Internal validity may have been reduced due to time. The participants in this study were asked to state their original objectives for participating after already completing the program. Transformations could have occurred while the individual participated in the program that could have altered his or her original objectives. Likewise, external interactions such as other students participating in the program or professional experiences may have impacted the participant's views regarding objectives. Additionally, the participant was asked to identify postenrollment transition that occurred after graduating several months after completing the program.

Assumptions

Assumptions made for this study include:

1. The participants answered the questions truthfully.
2. The researcher accurately captured the information.

Definitions and Terms

Following is a list of definitions for terms used throughout this paper.

Adult students - adults students are identified as individuals participating in education who are over 18 years old.

Educational program - a formalized program of study facilitated by an instructor.

Graduate program - formalized program of study taken by students who have already completed a bachelor's degree.

Learning objective - the reason or motive behind the adult's decision to participate in education.

Postenrollment transition - the period following completion or graduation of a program.

Typically this time period is 6 months to a year following graduation.

Chapter 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter will review the literature that exists regarding the characteristics of adult learners, motives describing why adults participate in learning programs, research regarding motives for participation, the benefits achieved by participating, and the transitions associated with adult experiences.

Identifying Adult Learners

Even though the number of adults participating in learning programs has increased, the profile of the “typical” adult learner has remained fairly consistent. The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) in the U.S. Department of Education started conducting surveys regarding adult education in 1969 (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999). Although survey methodology and sample design have changed over time, the results are indicative of general trends. The number of adults participating in part-time educational programs increased from 10% in 1969, to 14% in 1984, to 38% in 1991, and to 40% in 1995 (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999). The learner profile has remained relatively consistent. In 1965, Johnstone and Riveria (1965) described the typical learner in the following way:

- 50% of the learners were men and 50% were women
- 57% of the learners were under age 40 and the median age was 36.5
- 83% of the participants were married
- 60% of the adult learners had at least one child under 21

- 90% of adult learners were white
- 75% of the learners were in the labor force, 62% worked full-time, 58% had white-collar jobs
- Learners had higher median incomes than nonlearners
- Learners had an average of 12.2 years of education compared to 11.5 years for nonlearners, with the primary difference being participation in college
- 39% of learners lived in suburbs or large cities

The profile of the typical learner hasn't changed substantially. In 1980, Aslanian and Brickell (1980) described learners similarly, indicating:

- Over half of all learners are under 40. Compared to nonlearners, learners are twice as likely to be 25 - 29 years old.
- Single adults who have never been married and divorced adults are more likely to participate.
- Learners are more educated; only about 20% of adult learners have less than eight years of school.
- More learners than nonlearners come from families with incomes over \$10,000 and the proportion of learners to nonlearners increases as income increases.
- Full-time workers are more likely to participate in education than part-time workers.
- Adults engaged in professional and technical work are most likely to participate in learning activities while farm workers are least likely.

- Adults with more than five children participate less frequently, while there is not a substantial difference in participation in adults with fewer than five children.
- With regard to ethnicity, there are more Black nonlearners than Black learners; the proportion of Hispanic learners to Hispanic nonlearners is equal; there are more White, Oriental, and American Indian learners than White, Oriental, and American Indian nonlearners.

Compared to those who do not participate, learners are better educated, younger, most likely white and employed full-time and learners more likely have higher incomes (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999).

In addition to understanding the profile of adult learners, it is helpful to understand why adults participate. Adult students enroll in formal educational programs for many different reasons. Some enroll in college or graduate school in the middle of a life transition and others enroll in anticipation of life changes. Following is a review of existing literature about why adults participate in adult education.

Models Regarding Why Adults Participate in Learning

Force Field Analysis, Harry L. Miller

Miller combined Maslow's hierarchy of needs and the force-field analysis of Lewin to explain the differences in participation between social classes (Cross, 1981). Maslow's hierarchy of needs maintains people are concerned about primary needs first and then work to meet higher level needs. Thus, members of lower social classes will be interested in education to meet basic survival needs; while upper social classes will be

interested in achievement and self-actualization. As previously identified, research supports this theory regarding differences in participation.

Miller's strategy used Lewin's concept of positive and negative forces, which when combined form a resultant motivational force. In summary, the positive and negative forces behind participation of the different social classes indicates that while there are many positive reasons for the lower classes to participate, the negative forces often prevail further explaining the lower participation among the lower class. Meanwhile, the positive forces prevail with the middle class, further explaining their continued participation in education.

Expectancy-Valence Theory

Bergsten based his research on cognitive theories when he tried to explain why some people participate and some people do not (Long, 1983). The term expectancy references a belief that certain actions are likely to lead to certain outcomes. Valence is defined in terms of the anticipated satisfaction that may be derived from an outcome and the value attributed to the satisfaction it gives. The expectancy-valence theory proposes a person's behavior is a field of forces, the strength of which is a product of valence and expectancy. In theory, this model suggests people who view participation in adult education as a means to meet specific needs and believe they can complete the program will participate. Meanwhile, those who lack positive beliefs will not participate.

This model further assumes that participation is associated with the individual's personal situation. The individual's readiness for action and the interpretation of the situation determine the level of expectancy that participation will lead to desired results.

The person's needs determine the valence associated with the program. If adult education is seen as a means of satisfying the person's needs, a positive value will be placed on participation. Thus, valence extends past its influence on the present situation to include the impact participation may have on the future.

Bergsten's research indicates that adults with an interest in education for work-related and non work-related reasons had prior positive educational experiences. This implies that the value placed on education (valence) and the belief in the outcomes related to education (expectancy) are related to one's decision to participate in education.

Chain-of-Response (COR) Model, Patricia Cross

Cross's COR Model has seven key elements including:

1. Self-evaluation
2. Attitudes about education
3. Importance of goals and expectation that participation will meet goals
4. Life transitions
5. Opportunities and barriers
6. Information
7. Participation

This model assumes that participation in education occurs as result of a chain of responses (Cross, 1981). The model implies that participation in education begins with the individual and moves to external conditions. Self-evaluation refers to the person's confidence and achievement motivation. The person's attitudes and past educational experiences influence beliefs about continued educational involvement.

The importance of the goal and the expectation that goals will be met stems from the expectancy-valence theory. The two components of the expectancy-valence theory include the interaction of “expectancy,” the individual’s subjective judgment that pursuing the goal will be successful and lead to the desired reward, with “valence,” that indicates the importance of the goal to the individual. Self-assessment is related to expectancy, in that a person with high self-esteem expects to be successful, whereas someone with low self-confidence may have doubts regarding success.

The next component refers to life transitions. Aslanian and Brickell (1980) found many adults decide to pursue education based on a “transitional trigger point.” Whether it be a desired career change, job loss, divorce, or another trigger point, often a specific event leads to an adult’s decision to pursue education.

After embarking in educational activities, opportunities and barriers impact the adult’s learning behavior. Adults with a strong desire to learn will overcome even modest barriers to education and seize opportunities. However, modest barriers may overwhelm adults who are weakly motivated.

Ensuring adult participants have accurate information is a critical element of Cross’s model. This part of the model refers to learners having information about opportunities and information that minimizes barriers to participating in educational activities.

Overall, this model illustrates that adults who are highly motivated are more likely to overcome barriers. However, adult educational programs should not overlook the influence that can be exerted in components prior to opportunities and barriers.

The preceding theories provide insight surrounding factors related to an adult's decision to participate in educational activities. The next section will further identify specific motivations regarding participation in adult education.

Summary of Research on Why Adults Participate in Learning Activities

Do adults participate in learning activities for intrinsic or extrinsic reasons? How do demographic differences impact adult's motives behind participation? There is a multitude of research regarding the reasons adults participate in learning activities. First, general conclusions regarding participation will be reviewed. Then participation related to demographic variables and lifecycle transitions will be reviewed.

General Conclusions Regarding Why Adults Take Courses

Lorimer surveyed Brooklyn adults regarding their motives for participation. The survey indicated economic or social insecurity and a desire to advance vocationally or socially motivated most adults (Lorimer, 1931). Lorimer found that about two-thirds of the men and half of the women indicated they were participating because of vocational motives. Furthermore, most were interested in advancing in their current position.

Additionally, in 1963, London asked adults if they participated for work or non-work related reasons. Half the respondents indicated they participated because of work related reasons (Courtney, 1992). Thus, one reason participation in adult education could decline with age is the decreased importance of the vocational motive as one ages. London developed the following thoughts regarding the connection between a vocational

motive and participation in adult education:

- The better educated are more likely to be professionals
- In-service training continues throughout the professional career, while it is non-existent or exists only at the early stages of non-professional occupations
- Vocational reasons are probable for professional and non-professionals during the early years of a career and are more likely to continue for the professional
- Vocational motives should be higher among the better educated than the less educated within the older age groups, but equal among the younger age groups (Courtney, 1992)

Johnstone and Riveria (1965) examined why adults take courses and the benefits associated with participation. The eight reasons included and the number of participants who answered each response is listed below:

- To become a better informed person (37%)
- To prepare for a new job or occupation (36%)
- To use in the job I held at that time (32%)
- To spend my spare time more enjoyably (20%)
- To meet new and interesting people (15%)
- To aid in carrying out everyday tasks and duties around home (13%)
- To get away from the daily routine (10%)
- To aid in carrying out everyday tasks and duties away from home (10%)
- Other reasons (7%)

Many participants stated more than one reason for participating. As indicated above, 37% of the participants indicated they participated to become a more informed person.

This may indicate some intrinsic commitment to learning. When reasons are combined into broader categories, it appears that in addition to participating to gain information, many participants stated vocational reasons (68%) and social reasons (68%) for participating in education (Johnstone & Riveria, 1965).

In 1965, Dugger surveyed part-time Drake University adults regarding their participation in evening classes. Of the 1,567 adults surveyed, 63% of the adults indicated they were participating for vocational reasons (Dugger, 1965). The rest of the adults indicated a sociocultural motivation for participating. Dugger found that the vocational motive was strongest by employed adults. Unemployed adults more frequently indicated sociocultural motives (Dugger, 1965). Further analysis indicated that men were more vocationally motivated than women (Dugger, 1965).

There is a strong linkage between participation in education and vocational goals. Cross (1981) was not surprised by the linkage. People who do not have good jobs participate in education in hopes of finding better jobs. Those who have good jobs want to advance in their careers. Men are more interested in job-related learning than women. Likewise younger people are more interested in job-related learning than older people. Meanwhile, personal satisfaction is likely to be stated as a main reason for learning by 33% of participants (Cross, 1981).

From 10 to 39% of potential learners state seeking knowledge as their primary motivation for participating in education (Cross, 1981). The number of learners who state seeking knowledge as one of their reasons for participating in education is even higher, around 50% (Cross, 1981). Working to obtain a degree or certificate is stated as a reason for 8 - 28% of potential learners (Cross, 1981). This is very rarely stated as a

primary objective and usually coincides with the desire for job advancement. Likewise over 33% of learners admit escape is one reason for pursuing education (Cross, 1981). However, it is rarely one of the primary motivators for participating in education.

The preceding researchers identified primary reasons adults participate in educational activities. The proceeding studies will classify learners based on the motivational orientations leading to their participation in educational programs.

Houle

Adults participate in learning activities for a variety of reasons. According to Houle's research (1961) involving 22 case studies of active learners, there are 3 subgroups of adult learners including goal-oriented, activity-oriented and learning-oriented. Goal-oriented learners use each experience to meet a specific goal. Activity-oriented learners participate in learning activities to escape feelings of loneliness. Activity-oriented learners participate in learning activities, not to learn, but for something to do. Learning-oriented adults pursue learning for its own sake. Learners in this category have a desire to continuously grow through learning. Houle's research stimulated additional research regarding reasons adult students participate in learning activities.

Sheffield

Sheffield (1962) further tested Houle's learning orientations. His results defined five orientations including learning, desire-activity, personal-goal, societal-goal and need activity. The factor analysis for the first orientation, learning, was consistent with

Houle's findings. Adults who scored high on this orientation participate to satisfy curiosity, to acquire knowledge and to develop a better understanding about different ideas.

Sheffields's second orientation, desire-activity, and fifth-orientation, need-activity, re-define Houle's activity-oriented learner orientation. Learners scoring high in the desire-activity orientation participate in education because they find an interpersonal or social meaning attached to the learning activity that may not be related to the content or original purpose of the activity. Learners scored high on items such as being with friends and associates, making new friends and satisfying a desire to be active.

Sheffield's last orientation is the need-activity orientation. Individuals with this orientation participate in education because they find education provides an introspective or intrapersonal meaning that may have no connection to the purposes of the activity.

Learners fulfilling the third orientation, personal-goal, scored high on items such as to increase competence in employment and to gain recognition among peers. Learners with this orientation participate in education to satisfy personal objectives. Learners see education as a way to solve problems or pursue personal interests. This orientation is a derivative of Houle's goal oriented learner. Sheffield's fourth orientation, societal-goal, further characterizes Houle's goal-oriented learners. The societal goal-oriented learner participates to accomplish clear-cut social or community centered objectives. Sheffield's findings provide further clarification of Houle's subgroups.

Boshier

Boshier (1971) conducted a factor analysis using the Educational Participation Scale (EPS) to determine why adults participate in learning activities. He found the following 14 factors or “motivational orientations”:

1. Social welfare
2. Social contact
3. Other-directed professional advancement
4. Intellectual recreation (“stimulus seeking”)
5. Inner-directed professional advancement
6. Social conformity
7. Educational preparedness
8. Cognitive interest (“learning”)
9. Educational compensation
10. Social sharing
11. Television abhorrence
12. “Social” improvement and escape
13. Interpersonal facilitation
14. Education supplementation

Several of Boshier’s (1971) factors are similar to Houle’s (1961) goal-oriented learning dimension.

Factor 1, Social Welfare, consisted of five EPS items including:

- To become more effective as a citizen of this city
- To prepare for service to the community

- To gain insight into human relations
- To improve my ability to serve mankind
- To improve my ability to participate in community work

Adults who score high on this orientation participate in learning activities so they can achieve community objectives. This orientation is also similar to Sheffield's (1962) societal-goal orientation.

Boshier's (1971) factor 3 and 5 are refinements of Houle's (1961) goal orientation and Sheffield's personal-goal orientation. Boshier's (1971) third factor, other-directed professional advancement, is also most closely related to Houle's (1961) goal-oriented dimension. The EPS items related to factor 3 include:

- To carry out the recommendation of some authority
- To comply with my employer's policy
- To carry out the expectations of someone with formal authority
- To meet with some formal requirements
- To comply with the suggestions of someone else
- To comply with instructions from someone else

Adults who score high on this factor are trying to comply with authority and are more than likely extrinsically motivated rather than intrinsically motivated.

In contrast, adults who score high on items related to factor 5, inner-directed professional advancement, are more intrinsically motivated. EPS items include:

- To secure professional advancement
- To give me higher status in my job
- To keep up with competition

- To increase my competence in my job
- To keep up with others

Also related to Houle's (1961) goal-orientation and Sheffield's (1962) personal-goal orientation are factors 6, 7, 9 and 14. Three items were linked to Boshier's (1971) factor 6, social conformity, including:

- To take part in an activity which is customary in the circles in which I move
- To maintain or improve my social position
- To comply with the fact that people with status and prestige attend adult education classes

Adults who scored high on this factor feel participating in adult education is prestigious.

Boshier's (1971) factor 7, educational preparedness, identifies adults who identified the following reasons for participating:

- To clarify what I want to be doing in 5 years from now
- To assist me when I go overseas

Learners in this category are focused on a future goal.

Factor 9, educational compensation, has 3 items that scored high including:

- To supplement a narrow previous education
- To escape the intellectual narrowness of my occupation
- To provide a contrast to my previous education

Learners in this category want to make up for something in the past.

Finally, Boshier's (1971) factor 14, educational supplementation, included 2 items:

- To acquire knowledge that will help with other educational courses
- To help me earn a degree, diploma or certificate

Several of Boshier's (1971) factors are related to Houle's (1961) activity-oriented learning dimension. Boshier's (1971) second factor, social contact, included 4 EPS items:

- To fulfill a need for personal associations and friendships
- To participate in group activity
- To become acquainted with congenial people
- To make new friends

This orientation is also similar to Sheffield's (1962) desire-activity orientation. Adults scoring high on this orientation participate in learning activities for the social benefits.

Boshier's (1971) factor 4, intellectual recreation, is also similar to Houle's (1961) activity-orientation. It includes the following EPS items:

- To get relief from boredom
- To overcome the frustration of day to day living
- To stop myself from becoming a "cabbage"
- To have a few hours away from responsibilities
- To provide a contrast to the rest of my life
- To get a break in the routine of home or work

Adults who score high on this factor are motivated by satisfying an imbalance in their social and intellectual activities. This orientation is also similar to Sheffield's (1962) desire-activity orientation.

Factor 10, social sharing, includes 2 items:

- To share a common interest with my spouse or friend
- To comply with the fact that people with status and prestige attend adult education classes

Adults in this category are most likely interested in the social rewards associated with learning.

Factor 11, television abhorrence, with the item of, "To escape television" and factor 12, social improvement and escape, included one item, "To escape and unhappy relationship" are most likely indicative of participation in lieu of other social activities.

Factor 13, interpersonal facilitation, includes 3 EPS items:

- To respond to the fact that I am surrounded by people who continue to learn
- To be accepted by others
- To improve my social relationships

Learners who agree with these items are most likely participating for the social rewards.

In contrast, Boshier's (1971) factor 8, cognitive interest, includes adults who pursue learning for the sake of knowledge. Thus, this factor is congruent with Houle's (1961) and Sheffield's (1962) learning orientation. Items congruent with this factor include:

- To seek knowledge for its own sake
- To satisfy an inquiring mind

- To learn just for the sake of learning

To further understand the motives for participation, inter-correlational analyses produced seven second-order and four third-order dimensions. The second-order dimensions included:

1. Interpersonal improvement/escape
2. Inner versus other-directed advancement
3. Social sharing
4. Artifact
5. Self-centeredness versus altruism
6. Professional future orientedness
7. Cognitive interest

Third-order factors included:

1. Other-directed advancement or goal-oriented participants responding to vocational desires
2. Learning oriented in preparation for future activity
3. Self versus other-centeredness
4. Social contact

Boshier's (1971) results reveal orientations similar to Houle's (1961) typology and Sheffield's learning orientations. Boshier's (1971) factors provided further refinement and more specific reasons adults participate in adult programs.

Morstain and Smart

Morstain and Smart (1974) also conducted factor analysis of the Educational Participation Scale (EPS) and found six factors summarizing why adult students participate in learning activities. The sample was divided into men and women with 34 age groups (under 20, 21-40, and over 41). The six factors are listed below along with the items from the EPS that were connected to the cluster:

1. Social relationships

- To fulfill a need for personal associations and friendships
- To make new friends
- To meet members of the opposite gender
- To improve social relationships
- To participate in group activity
- To be accepted by others
- To become acquainted with congenial people
- To maintain or improve my social position
- To gain insight into myself and my personal problems
- To share a common interest with my spouse or a friend

Individuals who score high on this dimension are interested in gaining insight into their personal problems, being accepted by others and sharing an interest with acquaintances. This orientation includes the items in Boshier's (1971) factor 2, social contact as well as items from Boshier's (1971) other factors related to social involvement. Morstain and Smart's (1974) research indicated social relationships were most important to younger men and women.

2. External expectations

- To comply with instructions from someone else
- To carry out the expectations of someone with formal authority
- To carry out the recommendation of some authority
- To comply with the suggestion's of someone else
- To comply with my employer's policy
- To meet with some formal requirements
- To take part in an activity which is customary in the circle in which I move

Individuals that fall into this category are interested in learning not for intrinsic reasons but to fulfill expectations of others. Boshier (1971) classified the items in this orientation as other-directed professional advancement. Morstain and Smart (1974) found external expectations to be more important to men than women.

3. Social Welfare

- To improve my ability to serve mankind
- To prepare for service to the community
- To improve my ability to participate in community work
- To gain insight into human relations
- To become more effective as a citizen of this city
- To supplement a narrow previous education

Adults in this category have humanitarian interests. They participate in learning activities so they can participate in more community events. This orientation includes the items in Boshier's (1971) factor 1, social welfare. Morstain and Smart's (1974) results

indicated social welfare was of similar importance to men, regardless of their age, and decreased in importance to women as their age increased. Overall, social welfare ranked lowest for women over age 41.

4. Professional Advancement

- To give me higher status in my job
- To secure professional advancement
- To keep up with competition
- To increase my competence in the job
- To help me earn a degree, diploma, or certificate
- To clarify what I want to be doing in five years from now
- To obtain some immediate practical benefit
- To keep up with others
- To acquire knowledge that will help with other courses

Adults in this category have a vocational orientation and want greater competence in their chosen occupation. This orientation combines two of Boshier's (1971) groups, including factor 4, educational supplementation and factor 5, inner-directed personal advancement. Morstain and Smart (1974) found that professional advancement increased in importance with older men and decreased in importance to older women.

5. Escape/Stimulation

- To get relief from boredom
- To get a break in the routine of home or work
- To provide a contrast to the rest of my life
- To have a few hours away from responsibilities

- To overcome the frustrations of day to day living
- To stop myself from becoming a "cabbage"
- To escape the intellectual narrowness of my occupation
- To escape an unhappy relationship
- To escape a television

Individuals in this category participate as a means of escaping everyday boredom and responsibilities. In a sense educational activities provide a contrast to the adult's every day routine. This orientation is similar to Boshier's (1971) intellectual recreation factor as well as two other items, escaping television and escaping an unhappy relationship. According to Morstain and Smart's (1974) research, escape/stimulation decreased in importance with age.

6. Cognitive Interest

- To learn just for the sake of learning
- To seek knowledge for its own sake
- To satisfy an inquiring mind

Adults who fit into this category are motivated by an inquisitive mind. This orientation matches Boshier's (1971) factor 8, cognitive interest. Morstain and Smart (1974) found that women scored higher than men on this factor.

There are also similarities between Houle's (1961) three subgroups and the six factors identified by Morstain and Smart (1974). Factor 2, external expectations, and factor 4, professional advancement, are similar to Houle's (1961) goal-oriented subgroup (Cross, 1981). Houle's (1961) goal-oriented learners can be described in two ways, the self motivated learner who wants to achieve a personal goal and the individual who

pursues goals because someone, such as an employer, suggests he pursue a goal (Cross, 1981). Morstain and Smart's (1974) factor 3, social welfare, may also serve as a learner's goal, when the learner is focused on helping others.

Similarities also exist between Houle's (1961) activity-oriented subgroup and Morstain and Smart's (1974) factor 1, social relationships, and factor 5, escape and stimulation. Individuals who fit into this group participate in learning for a couple reasons. Some individuals want to avoid something unpleasant and some want to meet new people and/or start new relationships (Cross, 1981).

Finally, Morstain and Smart's (1974) factor 6, cognitive interest, is similar to Houle's (1961) learning-oriented adult. Individuals in this group are interested in learning for the sake of learning, without attaching outcomes to the learning (Cross, 1981).

Burgess

Burgess used the Commission on Non-traditional Study (CNS) National Survey (Carp, Peterson, & Roelfs, 1974) to study the motivations behind participation. Burgess (1971) hypothesized eight preliminary motivation clusters; screened a list of 5,773 reasons and came up with 70 items representative of the eight initial clusters. A factor analysis of the responses of 1,046 adults to a questionnaire employing the 70 items revealed seven important factors and CNS investigators added two factors they considered important including:

1. Desire to know, to become better informed or satisfy curiosity

2. Desire to reach a personal goal, get a new job, advance in present job, get certificate or licensure or attain degree
3. Desire to reach a social goal, to understand community problems, become a better citizen or work for solutions to problems
4. Desire to reach a religious goal, to serve church or further spiritual well-being
5. Desire to escape, to get away from routine or get away from personal problems
6. Desire to take part in a social activity, to meet new people or feel a sense of belonging
7. Desire to comply with formal requirements, to meet educational standards or satisfy employer
8. Desire for personal fulfillment, to be a better parent or spouse or to become a happier person
9. Desire for cultural knowledge, to study own culture (Cross, 1981).

Based on the responses gathered, the following generalizations can be made. First, many learners gave multiple reasons for participating. Likewise, many learners stated one reason they participated was to become better informed or become a better citizen. These are very broad reasons for participation and could apply to many adults. The more specific reasons, such as to get a new job, were more limited in applicability and were stated less frequently (Cross, 1981).

Summary of Findings About Motivational Orientations

In summary, there are many studies regarding the motives behind adult participation in organized learning programs. Houle (1961) provides a classification

system for identifying learning motives including goal-oriented, activity-oriented and learning-oriented. Sheffield (1962) further defined the goal and activity oriented learners. Meanwhile, Boshier(1971) and Morstain and Smart's (1974) factor analysis and Burgess's (1971) survey research provides further characteristics of learners who fit into each subgroup. Initially, different traits of adult learners were identified and then motives for participation were reviewed. Now research relating participation to demographic variables and life transitions will be reviewed.

General Conclusions Relating Demographic Dimensions to Participation

In addition to understanding general motives for participating, it is worthwhile to review differences in participation based on demographic variables.

The following conclusions were developed from a 1991 National Household Education Survey regarding reasons for participating in education by adults (Kopka & Peng, 1993):

- Whites were more likely than Blacks to enroll for a diploma and less likely to train for a new job.
- Women with children under 16 were more likely than women without children under 16 to enroll in training for a new job or career.
- Younger adults were more interested in obtaining a diploma or training for a new job.
- Men were more interested in improving or updating their skills in their current job, while women were more likely to enroll for personal, family or social reasons.

In addition to demographic variables, research indicates participation may be linked to transitions in an adult's life.

Aslanian and Brickell - Participation Linked to Transitions

Aslanian and Brickell (1980) linked participation in education to transitions in the adult life cycle. In addition to major life stages, adults face a multitude of transitions not linked to chronological age development, such as moving, divorce and death. Although transitions can be stressful as one is adapting to change; transitions also frequently lead to personal assessment. In fact, Aslanian and Brickell (1980) found that 83% of the learners surveyed indicated a change in their life caused them to participate in learning activities. The other 17% indicated they were participating for the sake of learning.

Research indicates most adults learn in order to move out of some status they must or wish to leave in order to enter a new status. As a result many adults reassess their situation and realize they have to learn something new prior to making a successful transition (Aslanian & Brickell, 1980). In order to progress through some transitions, learning must occur first. In other cases, learning occurs during or after the transition. Aslanian and Brickell (1980) took the reasons participants given by participants who said they were learning to make a past, present or future transition and classified the responses into seven categories they had hypothesized would occur.

The categories and responses included:

- Career (56% of the sample)
- Family (16% of the sample)
- Leisure (13% of the sample)
- Art (5% of the sample)

- Health (5% of the sample)
- Religion (4% of the sample)
- Citizenship, including a change in political party affiliation, increased political activity or application for U.S. citizenship (1% of the sample)

Most participants indicated they participated in learning to make career transitions.

Family and leisure transitions were a distant second and third. All other reasons were even less common.

Aslanian and Brickell (1980) probed further to identify if something that had happened in the 12 months prior to the participant's decision to learn had triggered their decision to learn. The trigger points were then classified into the seven areas listed earlier. Trigger events identified included:

- Career transitions, identified by 56% of sample
- Family events, identified by 36% of sample
- Health changes, identified by 5% of sample
- Religious changes, identified by 2% of sample
- Citizenship transitions, identified by 1% of sample
- Art and leisure, less than ½ of 1% of the sample

As the above results indicate, career and family transitions frequently triggered learning. The primary difference between the event stated for causing a transition and the event that triggered participation was in the art and leisure category. Since adults view leisure and art as taking place in their leftover time, the amount of leisure time correlates to the other activities the adult participates in. Therefore, most of the time when an adult identifies a triggering point, he is likely to select an event related to his primary

obligations as opposed to something in his leftover or leisure time. Since artistic learning is similarly perceived, it too was infrequently mentioned as a trigger point. Furthermore, the high proportion of career and family mentioned as triggering events is most likely due to the fact that adults spend a majority (80%) of their time with their careers and families.

Clearly adults participate for different reasons. To this point, the research reviewed has primarily focused on the reasons adults participate. But the research does not state whether participants are able to achieve their objectives when by participating in an educational program. One study that studied the benefits attained will now be reviewed.

Benefits Achieved Through Participating in Education

Woodley, Wagner, Slowey, Hamilton, and Fulton (1987) explored the reasons adults decided to participate in educational activities and the benefits they achieved from participating.

Participants selected from four main reasons for studying including instrumental, self-development, social and subject. About two-thirds of the participants stated they participated for an instrumental reason. The instrumental category included items related to:

- Improving job prospects
- Advancing within one's current career
- Gaining qualifications to take a higher-level course
- Helping in a volunteer role

Sixteen percent indicated they participated for self-development. The self-development category included items such as:

- To keep my mind active
- To acquire self-confidence
- To make up for lack of prior educational opportunities

A small percentage (2%) indicated a social reason for studying. The social category included items related to:

- Making new friends
- Sharing an interest with someone in my life
- Getting out of my usual surroundings

The last category, subject, was reserved for participant's who were interested in learning more about a subject of interest. Fourteen percent stated a subject reason for participating.

Men and women responded differently. Women were more likely to state personal development and social reasons while men were more likely to state instrumental reasons for participating. Furthermore, men and women had different instrumental reasons for participation. Women were more interested in re-entering the job market or moving into a new career. Women were also twice as likely as men to participate to keep an active mind.

While adult participants stated one main reason for participating, most stated more than one reason for participating. In order to determine the benefits participants achieved, students were given a checklist to indicate the benefits they achieved from

participating in courses. Participants could select from three categories including benefits related to yourself, benefits related to others and benefits related to learning.

Many students indicated they gained personal benefits. Three out of four adults indicated they developed an interest in a particular subject area, they gained knowledge for practical use, they became better informed and they became more confident in their academic ability. Older students were more likely to indicate benefits related to developing a new interest while younger students indicated benefits related to their career.

Although the study indicated the benefits achieved, it did not address if the participants had met their original objective associated with education. We will now review the transitions associated with different life situations.

A Summary of Transitions Associated with Death, Unemployment, and Parenthood

Does the adult's motivation for learning impact his/her transition after completing the program? Most of the research regarding the transition students confront deals with the transition for traditional college students in their 20's who transition from being a full-time to student to full-time employment. While graduation can be perceived as an accomplishment, it can also mean the loss of a support network, a routine, a sense of youth and a familiar environment (Vickio, 1990). To some extent graduation represents a loss of one's identity. Regardless of the situation, graduation represents change in an adult's life. Some people like change, others don't. Often a person's personality is both a result and a determinant of change (Parkes, 1987). Thus, reaction to graduation may vary based on the person's personality.

Bowling Green State University developed a "goodbye" brochure that has been used by different offices at the university. The term "goodbye" was used so students would reflect and prepare the upcoming changes. The goal associated with the brochure was to help students respond to the emotions associated with graduating. The brochure provides students with a range of feelings they may experience as well as tips for successfully dealing with the transition. The brochure may not be appropriate for all graduating students, but it provides further support for the idea that some students experience a loss when they graduate (Vickio, 1990). The loss may be similar to other transitions that adults face, similar to adapting to death, unemployment and parenthood.

The researcher is focusing, in part, on the postenrollment transition adult students make after completing a graduate program. Thus, the researcher compared and contrasted graduation to other transitions adults face including the grieving process, adapting to unemployment and adjusting to parenthood.

To some adults, graduation represents a loss of something that has been a part of their life for some period of time. Some students feel a loss because things have changed and they have to move on. Personal loss can be defined as "any experience which robs a person of something that is personally significant and/or familiar" (Whiting, 1986). In a study conducted by D'Andrea, Daniels, Heck, and Whiting (1992) that focused on the dimensions of personal loss, three factors were identified as impacting the loss including the context of the loss, conditions of the loss and the extent of support received. The study was conducted with 251 undergraduate and graduate students using the Personal Loss Inventory. The results indicate that over time, the participants acknowledged positive outcomes after overcoming the initial feelings that resulted with the loss. While

three factors were identified as impacting the adaptation to the loss, the study also indicated that adapting to loss is very personal and every individual will adapt and cope with situations differently (D'Andrea, et al., 1992).

Each individual may have different feelings when experiencing a loss. A person may experience a sense of helplessness, fear, or emptiness. Some individuals experience a loss of concentration, hope, motivation, and energy. Others are more fatigued or have a change in appetite (Colgrove, Bloomfield & McWilliams, 1991).

Since adults have different objectives for participating in learning programs, the loss felt when completing the program may also vary. Goal-oriented learners may have enrolled in a program with the intent of finding a new job. Graduation can indicate that the student should have or be closer to a better job. Thus an adult's feelings may hinge upon his success with finding a job. While looking and waiting, the adult may feel in limbo. Feeling a lack of control, the feeling of not knowing the outcome is the worse part of adapting to change for some adults (Colgrove, Bloomfield & McWilliams, 1991).

On the other hand, activity-oriented learners may feel a loss in their lives until they replace their school activities. Until the learner finds volunteer work, hobbies or other activities to replace the time spent in class, the learner may have a real void in his life. Finally, learning-oriented adults will feel the loss of being part of a learning program. Learning-oriented learners may decide to participate in community education programs or self-directed learning opportunities.

Regardless of the reason an adult decides to participate in an educational program, the person may feel a loss when he/she completes the program similar to the loss someone feels when dealing with death. The grieving process has been well documented.

Initially feelings of denial, confusion and fear are expected (Schleifer, 1998). Later stages of the grieving process include anger, relief, guilt, fear, loneliness and grief (Schleifer, 1998). Although generalizations can be made regarding the grieving process, everyone moves through the stages in their own way.

Another model indicates pangs of grief (an episode of severe anxiety and psychological pain) can begin within a few hours or days of bereavement, peaking in severity within five to fourteen days (Parkes, 1987). Mitigating the pain can be accomplished in many ways. Some people avoid thinking about the lost person and events associated with the lost person. Others find activities to replace the time spent with the lost person. Some individuals report that the first year of bereavement was a year of limbo activity (Parkes, 1987).

Anger is prevalent for most people during the first year of bereavement. Some report anger at its peak during the first month, with intermittent episodes during the first year (Parkes, 1987). For many, the most frequent form of anger is general irritability and bitterness. In many cases, the people that could help the grieving individual are unable to be helpful, because of their own feelings of irritability. This can lead to social isolation.

For some, bereavement leads to the development of a new identity. The loss of someone who provided financial support, social interaction, and shared interests can produce feelings of inadequacy. This leads to a re-evaluation of one's roles. This stage can last six months (Parkes, 1987). At the end of this time, the grieving individual begins to recognize that he or she can keep it together, even without the lost person. After this realization, the grieving individual often makes the necessary changes to accept new roles. As the new roles are accepted, the feelings of uncertainty and inadequacy

diminish. People move through different stages when accepting the death of someone close. Feelings of grief and anger eventually diminish. Meanwhile, after the grieving person begins to understand and accept new roles, he or she can usually start to accept his or her life without the person he or she lost.

Another type of loss is unemployment. Involuntary job loss is the most painful type of unemployment. Whether the job loss is due to downsizing or a temporary stage for someone between jobs, involuntary job loss can be potentially so severe that some researchers have compared responses to job loss with reactions to a more permanent loss, such as death (Finley & Lee, 1981). Various models describe the stages invoked by job loss. One such model described by Schlossberg and Leibowitz (1980) includes five stages beginning with disbelief, sense of betrayal, confusion, anger, and resolution.

Another model presented by Hill (1978) states that the series of stages begins with initial traumatic response, often typified by denial. Hill suggested this stage lasts two or more months. The second stage is an intermediate stage when the individual begins accepting the fact that he's unemployed. This stage can last several months. In the final stage anxiety decreases and the person becomes more accustomed to unemployment. This stage can last nine months to a year after unemployment occurs.

Although death and unemployment require adults to adapt to a situation that is usually more negative, adults also have to adapt to situations considered more positive such as parenthood. Research indicates adjusting to parenthood can evoke multiple reactions for the father, mother and/or the couple. Factors such as the age of the parents, available support systems, previous adjustment, and parenting experience impact the adjustment to parenthood (Osofsky, et al., 1985). Outside of the joy of having a new

member of the family, new parents have to adjust to a new routine of caring for an infant and increased financial obligations. Parents may feel insecure with their new role; parents may feel trapped with their new responsibilities; parents may feel frustrated with the sacrifices they have to make; and/or parents may feel guilty if the child is handicapped (Osofsky, et al., 1985). New parents may feel a wide range of emotions. Some of these emotions are similar to emotions felt when a person is adapting to a loss and may impact the transition to parenthood.

Conclusion

This chapter presents an overview of information available regarding the typical profile of the adult learner, theories related to why adults participate in learning programs, and classification schemes for learning motivations. This chapter also provides an overview of literature related to transitions adults make in situations such as death, unemployment, and parenthood.

Chapter 3

RESEARCH DESIGN

The purpose of this study is to identify the learner's original objective and determine if participating in an educational program enabled the learner to meet his or her objective. Additionally, the researcher identified the postenrollment transition that followed the completion of the educational program. The qualitative study used to gather results is further described in this chapter.

Sample Selection

This study utilized students who completed a Master of Science degree program in training and development in May 1999 at Drake University in Des Moines, Iowa. Most classes were delivered utilizing the ICN. The researcher had a list of forty-eight students who participated in the program and their addresses and phone numbers. The researcher attempted to call each of the students at work or at home. The researcher was able to contact only twenty students.

Most of the students live in communities that don't have colleges/universities with graduate programs and the ICN provides students with a forum for completing graduate work without traveling far from home. The ICN system utilizes technology to link several sites so that an instructor can facilitate instruction to several sites simultaneously. For example, the instructor can be in Des Moines with a group of students in the classroom, while television monitors deliver the instruction to additional sites like Omaha, Iowa City and Davenport. The students press a button on the

microphone when they want to comment on something and the instructor can focus the camera on the person who is speaking. Essentially, the ICN enables the faculty member and students from multiple sites to share information. Classes were offered on weekends, typically a Friday evening and Saturday for each credit hour.

Data Analysis

Data Collection Instrument

Since limited research has been conducted comparing the initial learning objective to the actual benefits obtained and even less information is available regarding the postenrollment transition that accompanies graduation, the researcher opted to use an open-ended qualitative study to gain as much information as possible from participants. A qualitative study was used to elicit conversation from participants. The researcher developed a general set of questions to initiate conversation and ensure that the basic information was gathered. The qualitative style enabled the researcher to gain the information desired while enabling the participant to elaborate on his/her specific situation.

Due to the wide geographic distribution of the participants, the researcher conducted a phone interview with each subject. The researcher asked each subject specific questions about his/her initial learning objective, if he/she had met his/her objective and if he/she gained any additional benefits from participating in the educational program. The researcher also asked each subject questions regarding the postenrollment transition that accompanied graduation. The researcher also asked each participant if he/she had experienced any changes in his/her personal or professional life during the program or after graduating. Some subjects needed additional clarification of

the question in order to answer the question. General demographic information was also captured for each subject. The researcher recorded the subject's answer to each question for future analysis.

Data Analysis

After completing the twenty phone interviews, the researcher transferred the data to tables for analysis. Since most of the questions were presented in an open-ended format, keywords were captured so frequencies could be run. In some cases, cross-tabs were used to determine interaction between variables.

Conclusion

This chapter described the population from which the sample was derived and summarized the data collection method. The subjects graduated from Drake University's master's program in training and development in May 1999. Most of the students participated in the program by taking the courses via the ICN. The data were collected via open-ended phone interviews. The next chapter will present the data collected from the subjects.

Chapter 4

PRESENTATION OF DATA AND FINDINGS

This chapter includes the researcher's findings. As indicated in the literature review, there are many ways to classify a learner's reason for participating in an educational program. This study not only captured the subject's objective for participating, but the researcher also discussed benefits the subject derived from participating in the educational program. The researcher also discussed the subject's transition associated with graduation.

Data

The researcher interviewed 6 males and 14 females. Twelve of the adults had children living at home, six adults had older children who no longer lived at home, and two adults did not have children. The strong presence of children living at home is consistent with the typical learner profile.

Each participant had completed a 4-year degree. The researcher was interested in if the participant's parents' educational level influenced the participant's decision to participate in an education. Five participants (20%) indicated their mother achieved more than a high school educational level. Likewise, six of the participants (30%) indicated their father had achieved higher than a high school education. The participants did not feel that their parents had influenced their decision to work toward a master's degree.

Initially, the researched asked each adult about the main reason for participating. The following table shows the participant's main reasons for participating.

Table 1

Participant's Main Reason for Participating in an Educational Program

Reason	Number of subjects			Percentage of subjects		
	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total
Earn a master's degree	3	10	13	50%	71%	65%
Gain knowledge to use in current or future position	1	2	3	17%	14%	15%
Interest in subject and/or lifelong learning	2	1	3	33%	7%	15%
Bored	0	1	1	0%	7%	5%
Total	6	14	20	100%	99%	100%

In addition to capturing the adult's original reason for participating, the researcher asked the participants if they had other reasons for participating. Twelve subjects (3 men or 50% and 9 women or 63%) stated more than one reason for participating. Four women cited multiple secondary reasons.

Table 2

Additional Reasons for Participating in an Educational Program

Additional reasons cited	Male responses		Female responses	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Gain knowledge in subject	3	100%	4	29%
Use in current position	0	0%	5	36%
Use for future career	0	0%	3	21%
Interest in delivery mechanism (ICN)	0	0%	2	14%
Total	3	100%	14	100%

The researcher also asked participants if they met their original objective. Each person indicated his/her original objective had been met.

Many of the subjects indicated they had derived unexpected benefits too. Five men (83%) stated multiple unexpected benefits, while 13 women (93%) stated multiple unexpected benefits (some stated more than one).

Table 3

Unexpected Benefits Gained from Participating in an Educational Program

Benefit gained	Number of subjects			Percentage of subjects		
	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total
Enjoyed networking and interacting socially	3	9	12	43%	50%	48%
Used in current job/want to use in different job	1	4	5	14%	22%	20%
Appreciated new ideas and knowledge	3	2	5	43%	11%	20%
Self-satisfaction	0	2	2	0%	11%	8%
Increased community involvement	0	1	1	0%	6%	5%
Total	7	18	25	100%	100%	101%

When the researcher asked the subjects about their transition after completing the program, subjects gave a variety of responses (some stated more than 1).

Table 4

General Feelings Stated Upon Completing the Educational Program

Feeling stated	Number of subjects			Percentage of subjects		
	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total
I felt relieved to be done.	1	4	5	14%	21%	19%
I was ready to finish the program and spend more time with my family or spend time doing other activities.	2	3	5	29%	16%	19%
I miss the intellectual involvement.	1	2	3	14%	11%	12%
I missed the interaction with other students.	1	1	2	14%	5%	8%
Wow – how did I ever have the time to be involved in school.	0	2	2	0%	11%	8%
I miss the activities associated with attending class and learning.	1	1	2	14%	5%	8%
I looked for other educational/training programs.	0	1	1	0%	5%	4%
I feel like something is missing, like I have a void in my life.	0	1	1	0%	5%	4%
I felt more prepared to share my ideas at work.	0	1	1	0%	5%	4%
Don't know – can't express	1	3	4	14%	16%	15%
Total	7	19	26	99%	100%	101%

To better understand other factors that may have impacted the person's transition, the researcher asked the subjects if they had dealt with personal or professional changes during or after completing the program.

Table 5

Changes Subjects Faced During or After Completing the Educational Program

Changes cited	Number of subjects	Percentage of subjects
Started a new job	8	40%
Divorced	2	10%
Increased involvement with community activities	1	5%
Moved to a new home	1	5%
Had 2 children (1 subject)	1	5%
Death of child	1	5%
None	10	50%

Conclusion

The results show that the subjects had similar reasons for participating in an educational program, most frequently to obtain a master's degree. Some participants stated a secondary reason for participating. Furthermore, several of the participants gained unexpected benefits after participating in the educational program. Results related to the subject's transition and changes experienced were also stated. The next chapter will discuss the results and compare the results to the information presented in the literature review.

Chapter 5

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter contains discussion, conclusions and recommendations related to the research findings presented in chapter 4. The purpose of this study is to compare the subject's original objectives to the benefits obtained from participating in an educational program while identifying the transition that occurred when the subject graduated.

Discussion of Findings

The reasons the subjects stated for participating are consistent with other research findings, although the proportion of learners participating to earn a degree (65%) is somewhat disproportionate compared to other studies. This may be related to the fact that it is unusual for people in smaller communities to have access to a master's program close to their home.

A considerable amount of research has been conducted and different classification schemes have been presented. When the results of the study are positioned in relation to the different schemes, results vary slightly.

Based on Houle's (1961) typology, the adults who participated to earn a degree or advance in their career can be classified as goal-oriented learners. Thus, 80% (16) of the adults had goal-oriented reasons for participating. The learners who participated to gain interest in the subject can be classified as learning-oriented learners. Thus, 15% (3) had learning-oriented reasons for participating. Finally the person who participated because of boredom can be classified as an activity-oriented learner. Sheffield's (1962)

classification provides further clarification in that all the goal-oriented learners were focusing on personal-goals. Furthermore, the activity-oriented learner fit Sheffield's (1962) classification of need-activity dimension.

Using Burgess's (1971) classification, the learners are grouped similarly to Houle (1961) and Sheffield (1962), with the following profile:

- 16 or 80%, have a desire to participate to fulfill a personal goal
- 3 adults or 15% indicated a desire to know
- 1 person or 5% indicated a desire to escape as a motive for participating.

Meanwhile, Boshier's (1971) would classify people slightly differently.

- 13 (65%) adults participated to earn a master's degree were congruent with factor 14, education supplement
- 3 (15%) adults participated to use in a current or future career fall into factor 5, inner-directed professional advancement
- 3 (15%) adults participated in order to gain knowledge related to a desire to learn, congruent with factor 8, cognitive interest
- 1 (5%) person fits the description of factor 4, intellectual recreation

Morstain and Smart (1974) would classify the learners into three groups including:

- Those participating to earn a master's degree and adults participating for use related to their career (16 adults or 80% of sample) fit the professional advancement orientation.
- Adults who participated to gain knowledge (3 adults or 15% of the sample) would fit the cognitive interest category.

- The adult who participated because she was bored (1 adult or 5% of the sample), would fall into the escape category.

For the most part, the adults fit into three groups, those intrinsically motivated to earn a degree or advance professionally, those who wanted to increase their knowledge base and one adult was interested in participating to escape boredom.

Men and women expressed different reasons for participating. A larger percentage of men participated for reasons related to learning. This is inconsistent with Morstain and Smart's (1974) findings that indicated women are more likely than men to have learning objectives as their motive for participation. The percentage of men and women participating for vocational reasons were about equal.

Men and women had different secondary objectives. Men were less likely to state multiple reasons for learning. The men who did state multiple reasons indicated their secondary reason for participating was to gain knowledge. Women provided vocational and learning objectives as secondary reasons for participating.

Essentially the subjects who stated secondary reasons for participating can be divided into two groups, those interested in their current or future career and those interested in knowledge. Houle (1961) would divide the learners between goal-oriented and learning-oriented. Sheffield (1962) would label the goal-oriented learners as interested in personal goals. Likewise, Burgess (1971) would label the learners as having a desire to reach a personal goal or a desire to know. Two of the three men who had primary objectives related to learning had secondary objectives related to meeting personal goals. This is consistent with Burgess's (1971) findings. Therefore some adults

participated because of a combination of reasons related to personal goals and a desire to learn.

When the researcher asked the adults if they had met their original objective for participating, each subject indicated he/she had met his/her original objective. Those who wanted their master's received their degree, those that wanted new jobs have found new positions, those who wanted to learn more about Training and Development and the ICN increased their knowledge and the person who was bored enjoyed the activity.

As stated, all subjects indicated they met their initial learning objective by participating in the educational program. These results support the theories surrounding participation presented earlier. Miller's Force Field Theory (Cross, 1981) concludes adults in the middle class, which we will assume most of the adults in this survey are in, will participate if modest barriers are removed. Since the master's level courses were being offered on the ICN, the largest obstacle, the availability of program offerings, was removed. The ICN therefore minimized the barriers and provided adults with a tool to achieve their goals.

Likewise the Expectancy-Valence Theory (Long, 1983) states that adults who believe participation will allow them to meet present/future goals will participate in learning activities. Once again, the ICN minimized the barriers for adults who had a goal to obtain their master's degree. Cross's COR Model (Cross, 1981) also states that adults who can overcome barriers to meet their expectations are more likely to participate in educational activities. When Drake started offering master's level courses over the ICN, opportunities existed for adults that had not previously existed.

While the subjects did not state original objectives related to social activities, several indicated it was an outcome of their participation. This could be related to the fact that classes were offered via the ICN. Each site had a small number of attendees who primarily took courses together a weekend or two a month for two years. Thus, participants formed close relationships with their classmates.

Overall, women stated they gained more non expected benefits than men. Women stated unexpected benefits such as networking and social interaction, use in career, increased self-satisfaction, and increased community involvement. Men were more likely to state learning as a benefit than women. Social interaction may not have been the participant's original objective for learning, but it was an unexpected benefit. This is consistent with Morstain and Smart's (1974) findings; social interaction is a motivator for younger adults. Most of the adults in this study were approaching or were already in Morstain and Smart's (1974) oldest age category.

After asking the subjects the benefits gained from participating in the program, the researchers asked the subjects about the transition that accompanied graduation. The adults in this study could plan toward the date they would graduate. In most cases, the student could ensure that he/she met his/her initial goal for starting the program and as the results indicate, each subject indicated he/she met his initial goal. What the students couldn't plan for were the emotions that accompanied graduation. Similar to the processes identified for grief, unemployment, or parenthood, the emotional response may depend on the personal situation of the participant.

In most cases, the transition of completing school is most similar to the transition to parenthood because it is a planned event. The transition experience is related to the

person's past experiences and support system. Thus the adults who replaced the time spent in school with family or other activities may have experienced an easier transition than adults who didn't replace their involvement with school.

Adults who were participating to obtain a degree expressed feelings of relief, some missed the activity, and others were glad to be done. The range in responses was similar for adults who participated for vocational reasons. Perhaps more predictable was the fact that the adults who originally indicated they participated to increase their knowledge indicated they missed the educational activity and were less likely to indicate a sense of relief. Likewise the adult who participated to escape boredom expressed that she missed participating in the educational program, similar to someone adapting to unemployment who feels in limbo.

Some students mentioned that they've started looking for more ways to utilize the knowledge gained. Some students indicated frustration with not being able to fully utilize the knowledge. They feel like they are in limbo, similar to someone adapting to unemployment. Since most of the participants lived in smaller communities and their personal situation does not allow them to move; they are frustrated with the limited number of career options related to the knowledge they gained.

With the exception of the adults who started new jobs, the changes identified occurred during the program. Overall, the participants indicated they have had to adapt to very few major changes. Most of the adults prepared for the change and transition that accompanied it. For example, the two adults who divorced during the program started the program to update their skills in preparation for the divorce. For these two adults, a looming divorce served as a trigger point for starting the program. One adult did

experience a change that he could not prepare for – the death of his child. He said he was still grieving his child's death when he completed the program. He said it impacted the transition and loss he expected to feel when he completed the program.

Conclusion

Overall, conclusions drawn from this study include:

- Individuals participated for a variety of reasons, including obtaining a degree, advancing within their career, learning new information, and escaping boredom.
- All participants met their initial learning objective. Furthermore, many participants derived non-expected benefits; the most common being related to social interaction.
- Participants experienced a wide range of feelings related to the transition associated graduation. For most students, the transition was most similar to that of parenthood; however the transition was dependent on each person's individual situation.

Recommendations

Adults have different reasons for participating in organized learning programs. Adults also experience different feelings when they complete a program. The transition adults face after completing a program is very personal, just as the transitions adults face in other situations is very personal. Ideally, the researcher should survey students regarding their learning objectives prior to the subject starting an educational program.

After the subject has completed the program, the researcher should follow-up with the subject to determine if the original objective(s) were achieved and if unexpected benefits were obtained. Finally during the transition period of 6 months to a year, the researcher should contact the subject to track the transition that proceeded the subject's graduation. This would eliminate the distortions that potentially occur with the lapse in time.

Based on the results presented, adults who are motivated to participate in learning activities for different reasons do experience slightly different transitions. However, our group was very homogeneous in its reason for participating, so a more widely dispersed audience is needed to increase the validity of the results. Additionally, some differences were noted between males and females; additional research should address how demographic variables such as gender, age, level of education obtained, and employment status impact the transition.

References

- Aslanian, C. B., & Brickell, H. M. (1980). Americans in transition: Life changes as reasons for adult learning. New York: College Entrance Examination.
- Boshier, R. (1971). Motivational orientations of adult education participants: A factor analytic exploration of Houle's typology. Adult Education, 21, 3-26.
- Burgess, P. (1971). Reasons for adult participation in group educational activities. Adult Education, 22, 3-29.
- Carp, A., Peterson, R., & Roelfs, P. (1974). Adult learning interests and experiences. In K. P. Cross, J. R. Valley, and Associates, Planning non-traditional programs: An analysis of the issues for postsecondary education. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Colgrove, M., Bloomfield, H., & McWilliams, P. (1991). How to survive the loss of a love. Los Angeles: Prelude Press.
- Courtney, S. (1992). Why adults learn; towards a theory of participation in adult education. New York: Routledge.
- Cross, K. P. (1981). Adults as learners. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- D'Andrea, M., Daniels, J., Heck, R., & Whiting, P. (1992, October). The factor analytic structure of personal loss. Measurement and Evaluation in Counseling and Development, 25, 121-132.
- Dugger, J. G. (1965). Motivation and factors characterizing adult learners enrolled in evening courses at Drake University. Dissertation. Iowa State University, Ames.

- Finley, M. H. & Lee, A. T. (1981). The terminated executive: It's like dying. Personnel and Guidance Journal, 59(6), 382-384.
- Hill, J. (1978). The psychological impact of unemployment. New Society, 19, 118-120.
- Houle, C. O. (1961). The inquiring mind. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Johnstone, J. W. and Riveria, R. J. (1965). Volunteers for learning. Chicago: Aldine.
- Kopka, T. L. C and Peng, S. S. (1993, June). Adult education: Main reasons for participating. Washington, D.C.: National Center for Education Statistics.
- Long, H. (1983). Adult learning: Research and practice. New York: Cambridge.
- Lorimer, F. (1931). The making of adult minds in a metropolitan area. New York: Macmillan.
- Merriam, S. B. & Caffarella, R. S. (1999). Learning in adulthood. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Morstain, B. R. & Smart, J. C. (1974). Reasons for participation in adult education courses: A multivariate analysis of group differences. Adult Education, 24(2), 83-98.
- Osofsky, H. J., Osofsky, J. D., Culp, R., Krantz, K., Litt, K., & Tobiasen, J. (1985). Transition to parenthood: Risk factors for parents and infants. Journal of Psychosomatic Obstetrics and Gynecology, 4, 303-315.
- Parkes, C. (1987). Bereavement: studies of grief in adult life. Madison: International Universities Press.

Schleifer, J. (1998). Everything you need to know when someone has been killed. New York: Rosen Publishing.

Schlossberg, N. K. & Leibowitz, Z. (1980). Organizational support systems as buffers to job loss. Journal of Vocational Behavior, 17, 204-217.

Sheffield, S. B. (1962). The orientations of adult continuing learners. Dissertation. University of Chicago, Chicago.

Vickio, C. (1990). The goodbye brochure: Helping students to cope with transition and loss. Journal of Counseling and Development, 68, 575-577.

Whiting, P. (1986). A developmental response to personal loss. Unpublished dissertation. Vanderbilt University, Nashville.

Woodley, A., Wagner, L., Slowey, M., Hamilton, M., & Fulton, O. (1987). Choosing to learn. Pittsburgh: Society for Research into Higher Education and Open University Press.